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Book review of Global Responsibility For Human Rights: World Poverty And The Development Of International Law

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Margot E. Salomon. ***Global Responsibility for Human Rights: World Poverty and the Development of International Law***. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. xxx, 244. £60.00. ISBN: 9780199284429.

This monograph by Dr Margot Salomon is a significant contribution to scholarship examining the case for international obligations to eliminate global poverty and its attendant harms. This field, while significant for the abominably large portion of the planet suffering severe deprivation on a daily basis, has taken on even greater importance in view of increasing worldwide economic inequities.

The book is ambitious, thoughtful, and provocative. The arguments proffered for a global duty to eradicate poverty are academically

notable for complementing, in legal terms, some of the trenchant ethical and philosophical reasons put forward by Professor Thomas Pogge and his colleagues. Likewise, the assertions are instrumentally valuable as states become ever more tempted to reduce their overall budgets, and especially so for spending beyond their borders.

Dr Salomon persuasively avers that global socio-economic disparities have been brought about through the development policies of international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. Further, she argues that these policies were created by wealthy nations endeavouring to advance the developing world through the lens of their own ideological priorities and economic perspectives. In doing so, these states precipitated conditions at odds with their self-perceived laudable aspirations. Accordingly, Dr Salomon maintains that collective obligations require wealthier nations to ameliorate the plight of impoverished nations, that those responsibilities comprise intertwined negative and positive duties, and that the evolving Right to Development best enshrines and elaborates what is required of international actors.

To support these assertions, Chapter 1 describes worldwide economic interdependence, a phenomenon heightened by globalization; Chapter 2 sets out a variety of human rights obligations requiring international cooperation in the pursuit of poverty alleviation; Chapter 3 interprets many of these arguments through the legal instrument of the Right to Development; and Chapter 4 sets out jurisprudential and doctrinal developments which lend support to notions of basic universal development rights that include positive socio-economic rights.

Chapter 5, in which Dr Salomon attributes global and transnational (rather than state-specific or even individual) legal responsibility for poverty reduction and capacity building, is the most intrepid part of the book and the one where the author distinguishes herself from the growing number of academics arguing on behalf of international duties to reduce poverty. The chapter notes the inhospitable

legal environment to individualizing human rights responsibilities of developed states, the extent of global economic interdependence, the many state actors implicated, and the enduring nature of socio-economic deprivations in poor countries. In this respect, Dr Salomon is in accord with lawyers, philosophers, and political scientists who aver a collective duty to alleviate global economic deprivation. However, rather than leaving that international duty as a vague obligation, she maintains that the responsibility of individual states as direct perpetrators of human rights abuses and their attendant duties can be divined. To do so, Dr Salomon proposes a series of indicators to assess how much an individual state directly contributed to world poverty, the impact that state has on policies affecting global economic institutions which create and perpetuate inequalities, the current ability of that state to remedy existing inequities, and, most crucially, the extent to which that state has benefited from these unjust circumstances. Requiring states which have benefited disproportionately from the institutionalized global economic system to demonstrate that they have done all they can to redress world poverty and to prevent its continuation is, in Dr Salomon's view, the most just and expedient way to rectify historically entrenched and continuing socio-economic inequality.

Chapter 6 bolsters some of Chapter 5's assertions by noting the increasingly collective (and thus non-autonomous) nature of the global free-market economy. It also highlights the corresponding economic disparity between wealthy states that benefit from the free-market scheme and impoverished states that do not.

This lucid, well-written, and scrupulously researched book moves forward the discourse on international obligations to eliminate the bane of worldwide poverty. At the same time many issues remain open. For instance, does a *right* to development have more salience than a socially conscious or goodwill commitment to eradicate poverty; can a correlation be drawn between ameliorating poverty outside a state's boundaries and reducing domestic security threats; and what is the scope of capacity-

building obligations within the context of alleviating poverty? These are important issues that understandably go beyond the span of this fine book, but it is hoped that Dr Salomon and others will address them in future.

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